



Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 22, 2008

TO: Joseph Horwedel, Director of Planning

CC: Envision San Jose 2040 Task Force, Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee

FROM: Christopher Flood, Board Member
Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (S/HPNA)

RE: **STREET BEAUTIFICATION IN
TRANSIT ORIENTED CORRIDORS**

Individual members of the Board of Directors of the S/HPNA have recently spoken out at a number of public meetings concerning proposed developments within our sphere of influence. This letter is intended to communicate that the Board of Directors as a whole is in favor of certain modifications to the planning process as outlined below:

What's missing and needed, are positive steps/incentives towards achieving the objective of a well-balanced Transit Oriented Community. The goal should be more "People Oriented" and less "Transit Oriented". In other words, instead of the negative incentive of reduction in parking, positive steps should be taken to create neighborhoods that encourage walking and bicycling. These include:

- building safe, convenient, attractive and well lit pedestrian walkways to the transit system
- building neighborhood bicycle paths to transit and regional bike trails
- creating attractive streetscapes with trees, sculptures and creative plantings. Anyone who has been to Chicago in recent years has probably been struck by the success of that city's street beautification program.

Higher density projects with relaxed parking requirements primarily benefit the developers. This benefit is granted by the City to the developer, but it is not an entitlement. These high density projects are in prime locations – close to transit, close to downtown, etc. Studies done in Santa Clara County and in San Diego found that residential developments near transit stations command a 17% to 45% premium in price.

A large portion of this economic benefit should come back to the community.

We propose that fees should be collected from the developers to beautify the streets and walkways immediately adjacent to the new developments. These funds would be dedicated to the neighborhood's streetscape improvements, upgrades and transit access. The existing PDO/PIO program could serve as a model for such a system.

The Morrison Park project is a good example of the drawbacks of the current policy. This project is being recommended by planning staff for approval with a 14% reduction in the parking requirements, based on:

- proximity to transit – even though we cannot expect significant improvements in our already inadequate transit system for at least 20 years.
- proximity to downtown
- proximity to the Alameda Neighborhood Business District (NBD).

This “proximity” is mostly in theory, not in reality. The true walking distance to the nearest existing transit station ranges from almost half a mile (2500+ feet) to 1.5 miles (8500 feet). Worse, the pedestrian and bicycle pathways are not convenient or appealing and at times they are dangerous.

- Stockton St. is dirty and noisy, and even less appealing to walk or ride on dark winter nights getting home from work.
- The underpasses on The Alameda and on Julian Street, to get to downtown are unappealing for pedestrians, and dangerous for bicycles.

Under the current policy, the desired transit oriented goals are unlikely to be achieved for this project. Instead, it will be just another functionally isolated, neighborhood-unfriendly development.

Another significant benefit to improving and beautifying the sidewalks, bicycle paths and streetscapes between the Morrison Park project and transit would be improved, attractive access to the Alameda NBD and Downtown. Overall, the quality of life for both current and future residents of the neighborhood would be improved. Perhaps in the end, even the developer will benefit by having a more desirable project.